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Our Readers Say

## Refutes Military-Industry Coup

EDITOR  
THE DEMOCRAT

It comes as a great surprise to those of us connected in one way or another with the military to hear that the United States is threatened by the bogeyman known as the "military-industrial" complex. Yet that was the charge made last fall by the left-wing extremist publication, *The Nation*, and repeated in Thursday's *Democrat* by that noted letter writer, Lyndon Burke Pfifer. If *The Nation* and other such publications were to be believed, a coup d'etat is imminent any day now, and we are just a few steps away from a military dictatorship.

Plainly this is absurd. If the military itself is so powerful, why do privates still earn \$78 a month and commissioned officers as little as \$3,200 a year? Almost every year postal workers and other riders on the federal gravy train manage to gain substantial and inflationary pay increases. Congress even overrode an Eisenhower veto to woo their votes. In contrast, year after year Congress ignores requests of the armed forces for a reasonable pay scale designed to retain trained manpower and end senseless and expensive turnover of personnel. Why? Because the military as such is the most politically impotent group in the United States.

Nowhere is the military's political impo-

tence more obvious than around military posts. Here, if anywhere, their very number should give some power. But families of servicemen continue to pay outrageous rents for substandard housing near military posts. The only time the military ever succeeds in achieving any aim is when that aim coincides with the aim of a group which does have political influence.

The military is quite naturally in favor of adequate weaponry to meet the threat of communist military activity, and to help overcome the manpower advantage of the Reds. But the size of the defense budget today is not as much a tribute to the power of the military as it is, mainly, to necessity, and, perhaps in part, to the lobbying of some manufacturers. . . .

Indeed, not only is the military's political power nil, but there seems to be a definite trend toward the lessening of military power in several other areas as well, including some which ought to be under military control. The space program, as everybody knows, was transferred to the control of NASA, a civilian agency. The CIA has pre-empted many areas of intelligence operations formerly reserved for the military. The Defense Department is firmly under the control of a civilian Secretary of Defense and civilian service secretaries. It depends upon a civilian Congress for funds. Its commander in chief is a civilian President. Whenever military men displease their civilian bosses, as General MacArthur, Gavin, Taylor, or Walker did in quite dissimilar ways, they are promptly "retired."

Also criticized by Mr. Pfifer was the practice whereby some retired military men work for various industrial concerns. This is seen as a "sinister" plot to lure defense contracts to certain firms. Actually, may it not be construed instead as a tribute to the technical knowhow and managerial proficiency of retired military officers? Are we to throw away the talents of these relatively young men on the assumption that although they could be trusted with the lives of young Americans, they cannot be trusted to do business honestly? . . .

But if the political power of the military half of the "military-industrial" complex is nil, what of industry? Now it is nothing new to hear that big business is trying to influence government spending. Why not? Everybody else is. It would be surprising if a group as deeply involved in every aspect of American life as the "industrial complex" failed to take an interest in government. I think it is obvious, however, to anyone familiar with history that the influence of business in government has decreased markedly . . .

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Clearly the "threat" of an all-powerful military-industrial complex is a hoax. This is not Argentina or Spain or the Soviet Union. This is the United States of America, with a long tradition of constitutional government. Not only does the military respect that tradition, but it is even now making great sacrifices for it. What it most needs now is support, not suspicion, from the American people.

ROBERT F. SANCHEZ